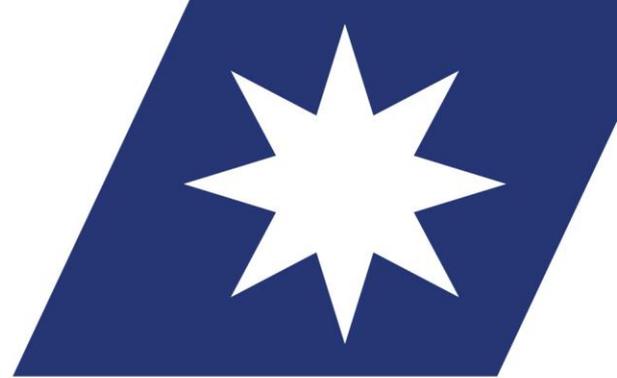


ROBBIE KATTER

Member for Traeger



MEDIA RELEASE

November 22, 2019

STATE ASKED TO THROW FARMERS MULGA LIFELIFE

Katter's Australian Party (KAP) MPs have called on the State Government to urgently pass amendments that will give drought-stricken Queensland farmers vital relief by allowing them to use a natural resource they already own to feed starving stock.

Through proposed updates to his *Vegetation Management (Clearing for Relevant Purposes) Amendment Bill 2018*, KAP State Leader Robbie Katter will ask that graziers in the state's south be allowed to harvest some of the 60 million acres of Mulga trees on their properties and turn the resource into fodder during times of drought.

This is currently illegal under the Queensland's vegetation management framework, and using Mulga to feed cattle can result in fines worth hundreds of thousands of dollar, as was the case with Charleville grazier Dan McDonald who is currently fighting the charges.

"The government is always going on about renewables as well as their goodwill towards our food producers, well here is a renewable resource in situ that farmers can use right away if we let them," Mr Katter said.

"Currently, absurd vegetation management laws restrict what landowners can do with their own properties and the actual result of this is cattle go hungry and perish, and graziers lose precious stock.

"While we are in drought, the KAP believes farmers should be able to access all Mulga on their property to keep their cattle alive.

"I want to be very clear and outline that fodder harvesting or knocking trees over that immediately regenerate is vastly different to blatant tree-clearing.

"One drought stricken producer reported that Mulga trees knocked down two years ago are already over 12 foot high growing through drought conditions.

"Mulga is a coppicing tree and this means it gets stronger the more you cut it back – so there is no harm done to the vegetation condition of the land by doing this; it is just common sense.

"It won't cost taxpayers anything, it won't destroy trees and it will directly help those in drought.

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MEDIA RELEASE

“Next week we will be saying let’s put politics aside and simply let farmers legally do what they have been doing for generations prior to the tightening up of the state’s tree-clearing laws.”

Mr Katter said fodder harvesting was a “self-regulating” act for primary producers.

“Fodder harvesting is essentially self-regulating in that, like storing hay in sheds, you need to ration the trees so that you always have reserves,” he said.

“It has never made sense to knock down every tree because this leaves you nothing to use for fodder for next year.

“This is why, when regulations were introduced, there was still 60 million hectares standing tall because farmers had preserved this resource so it’s always there when they need it.

“The existing regulations around this practice make no sense and even more so under these oppressive drought conditions.”

Mr Katter said he had spoken to various southern cattle producers in the Mulga lands, which are outside his Traeger electorate, who told him this change would give them much-needed immediate relief.

“In terms of helping those in drought, this is as close as the government can get to making it rain for these people,” he said.

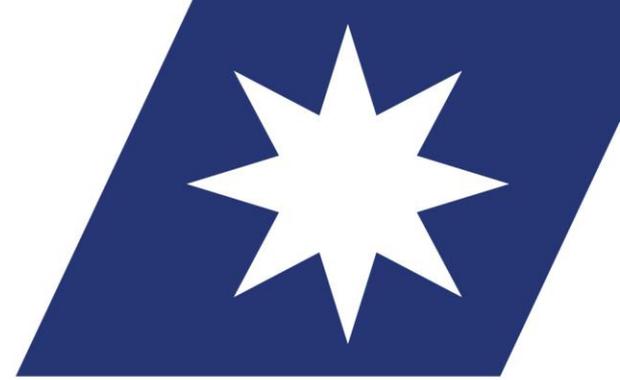
“Those who live out there amongst it are in the best position to judge, and they should be listened to very closely about how we manage this.

“The State Government haven’t made the slightest effort to help in the drought yet, so here is there opportunity to save a large section of the industry at no cost to the taxpayer with nil long-term environmental impact – it’s a solution for government that is served up on a silver platter.”

Mr Katter will seek to introduce his Mulga amendments at 2019’s final Queensland Parliament Sitting next week.

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MEDIA RELEASE

The Mulga Lands bioregion of Australia exists in southern central Queensland and north-western New South Wales (NSW).¹

The area is characterised by flat to undulating plains with strips of low hills, and the dominant vegetation types are Mulga (which is a very good source of livestock fodder) and Eucalypt woodlands.

Overall, 74 per cent of the bioregion is in Queensland, while 26 per cent is in NSW.

The area is sparsely populated, and mostly used to graze cattle and sheep.

—ENDS—

Media inquiries: Morgan Oss, 0428 772 544

¹ "Mulga Lands bio-region", Rangelands – Taking the Pulse, 2008,
<https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/a8015c25-4aa2-4833-ad9c-e98d09e2ab52/files/bioregion-mulga-lands.pdf>